

Good Krack Circumnavigates the UK by Dina Fletcher and Jim Barrett

Jim and I decided to sail around the UK when backpacking in South America in the winter of 2004/5 and I realised how little I knew about our home islands. It is something I have always wanted to do and Jim said there was no way I was doing it on my own. So he took three months unpaid leave. We used the 2005 season to make sure our boat *Good Krack* was equipped for the conditions we would experience and for living aboard for 3+ months. Our main purchases were a Garmin GPS Map 292 'Big Gary', a DSC radio and a rain awning that also doubles as a bimini. We decided to hire a 4-man life raft and an EPIRB 406.

Charts were one of our most expensive but necessary expenditures. When we worked out the numbers of all those we would need, the total was over £1000! We were so lucky to be offered two-thirds of those on loan from Jock Stoddard, who had completed a similar passage in 2004, a huge saving. We also had to purchase 5 Blue Chart Data Cards for 'Big Gary' which cost £648.

Our main concern was our stamina in a GK29, but the boat was fantastic, she coped with everything thrown at her and could have dealt with more, a Michael Pocock for Laurent Giles and Partners design, for Westerly to build – certainly a seaworthy boat.

We have owned *Good Krack*, a 1978 Westerly GK29 sail no. 73, for 6 years. She was in a poor condition when we bought her although remedial osmosis and keel reinforcement had been carried out. We have continued over the years with new rigging, sails, engine and hot water system, pulpit re-glassed, keel blasting, rudder bolts, gas pipe work and stove, electrical wiring, upholstery, tiller pilot, wind indicator. In fact just about everything, except radar, wind or sun generator or coolbox. Stowage and storage could have

been a problem but we streamlined everything and stowed it carefully, each locker having a use. We used below the water line on the port-side for perishable food in baskets and tins. This worked very well until we were south of the Wash when the sea temperature rose and butter was no longer a solid block. Most of the space was filled with equipment; I even took my wet suit, mask and snorkel in case of a fouled prop; and spares for just about any eventuality. Two hot water bottles were one of the nicest luxuries, a thermometer on the pushpit gave me twice daily readings and I also recorded the barometric pressure twice a day to help with weather forecasting.

We covered 1,638 miles of which we sailed half, motor sailed 3/8 and motored 1/8. I am not an advocate of preventers when conditions are strong wind from astern and a rough sea. I've heard too many stories of broken booms, so I used only a genoa with anything up to 9 rolls – GK flew along! We did five night passages – across the Celtic Sea – 153mils, the North Channel – 60mils, The Wash – 155mils. The Plymouth Club burgee was flown proudly at all times.

We experienced the wettest and windiest May for 27yrs whilst in Ireland and on the west coast of Scotland, and the hottest July ever as we sailed south in the North Sea and west along the English Channel.

Reeds Nautical Almanac and paper charts were our navigational aids plus 'Big Gary' and our handheld Garmin GPS 72 'Little Gary'.

We used 440 litres of diesel (£242.08) – 293 hours @ 1.5 litres an hour

Our fuel tank holds 60 litres + [(2x11.5) + (6x5.5)] = 56 litres in cans – Total 116 litres

Our time away was 12 weeks 5 days, visiting 38 ports + 2 Plymouth (our home port). We left on 28 April returning on 25 July – 90

nights. Costing us £1223.11 which averaged £13.60 per night. In Ireland, Dun Laoghaire was the most expensive at £24 per night. In Scotland, Ardratrive (Oban) was £15 and Tobar-mory (Mull) was £16. On the east coast Whitby was £18 and Shetley was £20 and on the south coast Port Hamble was £25.

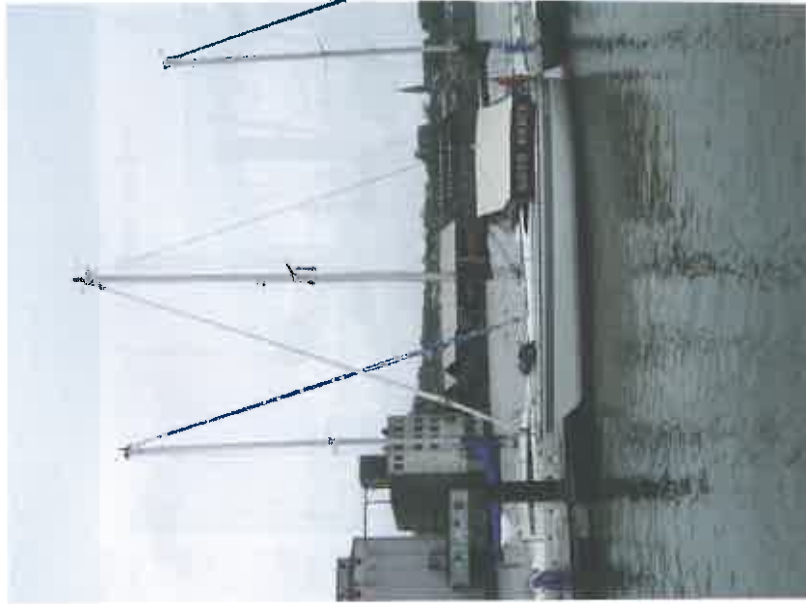
The facilities were mixed but we managed to get a shower at each place we stayed, even if it meant using a hotel such as in Waterford (Southern Ireland), Campbeltown (Mull of Kintyre), Tobar-mory (Mull), or a boat yard (Crinan + Skye). Laundry was more 'hit and miss' but we kept on top of it. One of my concerns was that our standard of eating would not fall – we ate fresh food 98% of the time. The usual menus were pork chops, gammon steaks, omelette, fish and Bolognese – it is amazing what two rings and a grill can produce. We fell back on dried meals for two long, rough passages and tinned steak and chilli three times when fresh stores had run low. We ate out now and again.

Our route took us across the Celtic Sea to Southern Ireland, up the east coast of Ireland, across the North Channel to the Mull of Kintyre, through the Crinan Canal, up the west coast of Scotland through the Sound of Luig and past Fladda to Kerrera Island opposite Oban. Then up the Sound of Mull to Tobar-mory, round Ardnamurchan Point (most westerly of UK mainland) to Skye. Then we returned to Mull (Tobar-mory) and went up Loch Linnhe to Corpach (near Fort William) and the start of the Caledonian Canal. Sixty miles later (including Loch Ness) we

were out into the North Sea at Inverness. From here we sailed east along the Moray Firth, and south past the river Tay, across the Firth of Forth. Then past the rivers Tyne, Tees and Humber, across the Wash and the Thames.

Some of the most special moments were

- Passing through sea areas which I have heard all my life on the shipping forecast (except Shannon and Fair Isle)
- Calling up the Coast Guard Stations (except Malin Head and Shetland).
- The habit of waking up for the 0520 Radio 4 broadcast and setting the alarm for the Ch. 16 four hourly maritime safety bulletins.



Waterford – rain, rain and more rain!